Qasidah Al-Burdah: The Cloak of Love or Ignorance?

By Ahmad Musa Jibril

Bismillah

Introduction

Imam Muslim related from Anas (radia allahu anh) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said: 'None of you will truly believe until I am more beloved to him than his family, wealth and all the people.'" [67]

In the same way that love of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) is a reason for attaining the good of this world and the Hereafter, loving him is also a reason for achieving the sweetness of Iman.

But, how do we manifest our love for him? It is by following the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Allah says: "Say (Muhammad), if you do love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you (in return) and forgive your sins" (Qur'an 3:31)

To love the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) is to love Allah alone, to worship Allah as he worshipped Allah. Allah says: "There are men who take others besides Allah as equal with Him. They love them as much as they should love Allah. But the believers have more love for Allah." (Qur'an 2:165)

In the past few years, there is a particular piece of Arabic poetry that has reached the Muslims in the west and has been translated into English. This poem is called Qasidah Al-Burdah by Muhammad Al-Busairi. It is also known as the most famous if not the most famous poem that supposedly praises the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam).

The poem has been widespread in Arabic for nearly eight centuries and many scholars have replied to it in Arabic.

Among those replies are:

1. Al Dur AlNadeed for Alshawkany.
2. In Tasier AlAzeez Alhameed is a reply by Sheikh Sulieman Bin Muhammad Bin Abdelwahab.
3. Fateh AlMajeeed Abdalrahman bin Hassan
4. Reply to Al Burdah by Sheikh Abdallah Aba Ibteen (70 page long reply)
5. Ghayat AlAmany fe Alrad Ala Alnabhany by Mahmood Shukry Al Aloosy
6. Reply to Burdah by Abdel Badee3 Saker
7. Reply to Burdah by sheikh Abdel Azeez Al Abdel Lateef
8. Ma3loomat Muhimah An Aldeen By Jameel Zino

There would have been no need to write a reply in English had not misguided people translated it, bolstered it, and undertook to propagate it at so-called Muslim social events. While it has recently been translated into English by those who support this, through my research, I was unable to find any conclusive or inconclusive reply to it in English.

Therefore, I take it as my duty to defend this Aqeedah and ask Allah that it be for His sake only, and that the harm of those who will slander me
be among my balance on the judgment day.

There are lines in the poem that may mean something good or bad. Even though, these lines may be interpreted with truth or falsehood, the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) taught us to think good first unless there is proof against a particular matter. Hence I gave the author the benefit of the doubt and did not mention those lines. Based on this there are two aspects of the poem that must be remembered. First, there was enough and sufficient errors in the other lines. Second, in some translations, the meaning is not accurate. The explanation of how it is wrong and read in Arabic must be noted.

Background

1. This poem is very popular and widespread in Arabic. There are those who memorize it and others who chant it. There are those who made it their focus of study coupled with supposed scholars who waste their time on its elucidations. Today, there are over fifty written elucidations on this in Arabic.

2. The name given to this poem was Qasidah Al-Burdah. The author chose this name as a copycat from another poem praising the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) by a companion named Ka3b Bin Zuhier. There are no similarities in the two poems except the name.

   It was given other names such as Albara'ah, meaning the cure, because it supposedly cured the author from being paralyzed after he read it.

   It was also given the name the Hardship because it supposedly eases off hardships when one reads it.

3. Some Sufis claim that for each line of that poem is a special benefit such as helping you from being poor or helping you to cure diseases.[i]

   Muhammad Saeed Kailany replied to this and said: "Some were not satisfied with the fabrication they placed on significance in reading this poem rather they went on to place rules on reading this poem that were not placed on the Qur'an. Some rules for example are to be pure upon reading it, to face the kiblah, and to have precise grammar and pronunciation upon its recitation. To fully comprehend its meaning, they also had a special band that was sent out to wedding and funerals to chant it. They were given monetary compensation, and of course that is all the fabrication of the Sufis who wanted to monopolize its recitation."[ii]

4. As to why he wrote it, Al-Busairi had become paralyzed at or before he wrote this poem. He claims he wrote it, prayed and cried, and recited it. After he prayed he had a dream that the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) placed his cloak on him. The next day he took a walk to the local bazaar where he was approached by some poor people. One asked him, "Where is the poem?" He answered, "What poem?" The person then explained, "The one you chanted to the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) while you were ill, wallahi I have seen a vision where the Prophet is happy with it and placed a cloak on the one who recited it." The poor man then recited part of its beginning, and said that he saw the Prophet swaying back and forth to the tones of the poem in his vision.

After that, the dream became popular and so did the poem.

REPLY:

a) He sought refuge and cure possibly in and through the poem itself which is shirk because refuge in other than Allah is shirk. Or, if it was the contents that supposedly cured him then that is shirk as well.
b) He said he had seen a dream of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) yet did not describe him. As we know the devil does not and cannot imitate the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) in his original form. However, the devil can come in other forms claiming to be the prophet. Here, Al-Busairi did not describe the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) even though he had supposedly seen him in his dream.
c) As to how Allah responded to his dua' and cured him from being paralyzed, Ibn Taimieh (rahimahu allah) said: "The reason Allah responds to those who do dua' in a haram manner is because they are in such a hardship so extremely desperate in making their dua' that had they been making that dua' in front of a statue, Allah would respond to them. Because he desperately turned to Allah even though he is committing shirk next to a statue, and sometimes even when one seeks refuge in those dead in grave in similar desperate hardships Allah responds and then the person will be punished for that shirk unless Allah forgives him)."[iii]

5. The author, Muhammad Bin Saeed Al-Busairi is attributed to the town where he was born in Egypt in 608 A.H. He delved into Sufism and worked as a writer even though he was not a formidable writer. His works show he was not a knowledgeable faqih either. In fact, he was not even a righteous worshipper. The people of his time hated him because he used his tongue in evil. He would always ask people for money. He supported the leaders whether they were righteous or not in order to receive financial gain.

   He joined the Sufi Shathilieh Tareekah, and had poems praising it and its manners. Yet he had other poems where he complained about it because, he tells us, he was unable to satisfy his wife's sexual desires. He died 695 after hijra [iv]

Analysis of the Poem

وكيف تدعو إلى الدنيا ضرورة من * * * لولاه لم تُخرج الدنيا من العدم

For had it not been for him this world would not have come out of non existence. (Chapter 3/10)

1) This is an extreme exaggeration in the description of the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). We love the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) but this love has a limit we cannot go beyond or below. For example, because of our love of the Prophet we cannot say he is the son of Allah, as the Christians went into an extreme in loving their prophet. If we did this, we would be just like the Christians.

   In this line Al-Busairi said the universe was not created except for the purpose of the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) .

   Allah said "And I have not created human and jinn but to worship me." (Althariyat:56)

And even the Prophet was created to worship as Allah said, “And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (i.e. death).” (AlHijer 99)

The Sufis may come back with a supposed hadith where it was said, "Had it not been for you the universe would not have been created." The problem with this hadith is it is fabricated and cannot be given as proof.[v]

فاق النبيين في خَلق وفي خُلُق * ولـــم يـــدانــــوه في عــــلـــــــم ولا كر**
وكلهم من رسول الله ملتمس * غرفاً من البحر أو رشفاً من الدي**
He transcends the Ambiya, physically and in (noble) character.
And (the other Ambiya) cannot come near his in knowledge and noble nature kindness.
They all obtained from Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam).
(Like a) handful (of water) from the ocean or (a few) sips from continuous rains. (Chapter 3/22)

2) Here Al-Busairi claims that all messengers benefited and received from the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Meaning, the prior messengers received and benefited from the latter. No realistic mind can accept that, and more importantly, there is no proof for that claim.

This goes back to some major misguidance which is present in Sufi belief. Alhalaj said, “The Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) has brightness before the universe was created, and from it every (piece of) knowledge and every thing was derived, he even supplied the previous messengers.”

Ibn Araby Altaey said, “Every Prophet and messenger from Adam to the last messenger takes from the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad .”[vi]

نبيهم * * * واحكم بما شئت مدحاً فيه واحتكم في دع ما ادعته النصارى
Discard what the Christians claim about their Nabi
Then decide and say what you wish in praise of him (Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). (Chapter 3/29-30)

3) Here he says as long as you refrain from claiming to our messenger that which Christians claimed to theirs then it is permissible for you to go as extreme as you want in your love for the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). So long as you do not claim calling the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) the son of Allah, one can state anything, be as extreme as they wish to be about him to show one’s love for him. To be more specific then, one can prostrate to the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) so long as one does not claim about him what the Christians do that he is to be worshipped.

The proof against this is the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said, “Do not do to me as the Christians did to Issa, I am a messenger of Allah, therefore, say the servant of Allah and His messenger.”

Ibn Al Jawzy said the hadith means do not go into extreme in one’s love for the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). The context of the hadith was such that Mu’ath (radia allahu anh) asked the Prophet if he may prostrate to him, and the

Prophet (sallah allah alieh wasalam) set a rule against going into extreme love for him.[vii]

لو ناسبت قدره آياته عِظماً * * * أحيا اسمه حين يُدعى دارس الرمم
If his miracles were proportionate (according) to his rank, in greatness,
Then his name would have, when called out brought decaying bones back to life (Chapter 3/35-36)

4) Those who explained this poem said that this line means that had the miracles been given to him by Allah reached the level of his honor, then among those miracles would be that Allah would reconstruct from bones and dust a human simply due to the blessing and sacredness of calling of his name.[viii]

In an indirect way this objects to the miracles Allah has chosen for his messenger.

Imam Mahmood Shukry Al Aloosy said in reply to this line, "This is extremism in praise of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) , as how can one say the Qur'an does not suit the honor of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam), or that it is lower than his honor. Also the name of Allah is mentioned yet as sacred as Allah's name is, the bones and dust do not resurrect to His name.[ix]

لا طيب يعدل ترباً ضم أعظمه * * * طوبى لمنتشق منه وملتثم
No perfume equals the dust (earth) which is touching his (Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam's mubarak) body.
Glad tidings be to the person who smells it (the dust) and kisses it. (Chapter 3/61-62)

5) Al-Busairi made the dirt where the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) is buried better than the smell of best of musk. Then he said (Tuba) praise or (praise of jannah) for the one who inhales it or kisses it.

That is extremism, and no doubt, an innovation that leads to clear shirk.

Ibn Taimieh (Rahimahu allah) said, " The imams agreed that the grave of the Prophet should not be touched or kissed, and that is to guard tawheed."[x]

أقسمتُ بالقمر المنشق إنّ له * * * من قلبه نسبةً مبرورة القسم
I take an oath (of truth) by the moon that was split, it bears.
A connection with his heart (which shows) the truth of my oath. (Chapter 5/7-8)

6) Here the author gives an oath by the moon. As we know, giving an oath by other than Allah is minor shirk. The Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said, "Whomever gives an oath by other than Allah has committed Shirk or kufer."[xi]

Ibn Abdel Albar said, "It is not permissible to give an oath by other than Allah in any manner or form, and it is united upon by scholars."[xii]

ولا التمست غنى الدارين من يده * * * إلا استلمت الندى من خير مستلم
I did not ask for the wealth of the two worlds from his hand.
But I received a great gift the best hand that was ever kissed. (Chapter 5/19-20)

7) The author says he would like to achieve the richness of both worlds in this life and the hereafter from the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) .

However, Allah says:
"Whatever grant you have is from Allah." (Nahl:53)
"See from Allah your rizk and worship him." (AlAnkaboot: 17)
"And say who gives you rizk from the sky and earth." (Younis:31)

Finally, as a warning to us with regards to this matter, Allah says, "Say: (O Muhammad to those polytheists, pagans, etc.) "Call upon those whom you assert (to be associate gods) besides Allah, they possess not even the weight of an atom (or a small ant), either in the heavens or on the earth, nor have they any share in either, nor there is for Him any supporter from among them." (Saba: 22)

فإن لي ذمة منه بتسميتي * * * محمداً وهو أوفى الخلق بالذمم
If I had committed any sin my covenant is not (likely to be) violated.
With my Nabi Rasuluallah Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam and nor is my rope broken.
For verily I have a security from him due to my name.
(Being) Muhammad , while he is the most faithful of mankind in fulfilling his promise. (Chapter 9/11-14)

8) Here, Al-Busairi claims that he has a special covenant and relationship with the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) based on the fact that his name is also Muhammad .

There is no bond between anyone and the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) simply because he shares the same name. There are many individuals whose name is Muhammad who are corrupt deviants.

The bond between anyone and the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) comes with the obedience to Allah and following the commands of the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Sharing the same name has no relation to following the prophet's (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) actions and commands.[xiii]

القسم في لعل رحمة ربي حين يقسمها * * * تأتي على حسب العصيان
Perhaps the mercy of my Lord when distributed.
Would be distributed in proportion to the sins. (Chapter 10/9-10)

9) Here he says that it is possible that the mercy of Allah comes down based on the amount of sins. Meaning, the more one sins, the more mercy from Allah. This goes against what Allah says in the Qur'an.

Allah says, "And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope; Surely, Allah's Mercy is (ever) near unto the good doers." (AlAraf: 56)"

Allah says, "And ordain for us good in this world, and in the Hereafter. Certainly we have turned unto You. "He (Allah) said: (As to) My Punishment I afflict

therewith whom I will and My Mercy embraces all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who are the Muttaqun (pious), and give Zakat; and those who believe in Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs and revelations, etc.)." (AlAraf:156)

يا أكرم الرسل ما لي من ألوذ به * * * سواك عند حلول الحادث العمم
Most generous of mankind, I have no one to take refuge in
Except you at occurrence of widespread calamity. (Chapter 10/1-2)

10) Al-Busairi says here that when the biggest of all hardships befalls him, he has no one to turn to but the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). This is the kind of shirk that may place one in an everlasting spot in hell

Allah says, "And invoke not besides Allah, any that will neither profit you, nor hurt you, but if (in case) you did so, you shall certainly be one of the *Zalimun* (polytheists and wrong-doers). " (Younis:106)

Imam Sulieman bin Abdel Wahab said, "Pay attention to this line of shirk, he denied anyone to turn to in hardships but the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). And, refuge really belongs to Allah with no partner, as He is the One whom all humans turn to. He (AlBusairy) also calls the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) in that line (of poetry) in lowliness and time of hardship and need, and asked him that which should only be asked of Allah. And, that is shirk in uluhiyah." [xiv]

Imam Abdelrahaman bin Hasan bin Abdelwahab said, "He honored the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) in that which saddens the prophet, and the Prophet forbade exaggerating in his honor that which is much less than what Al-Busairi has done here as anyone with any knowledge knows. This person limited humans to turn to another human rather than Allah. Allah denounced those who do "liyath" (the term the author used as turning to) in Surat al Jinn ayah 6 *(And verily, there were men among mankind who took shelter with the masculine among the jinns, but they (jinns) increased them (mankind) in sin and disbelief.)* Meaning they added deviance, liyath and giyath. One of which is to ask for good. And, the other asking to turn away harm. Both are forms of worship that only belong to Allah." [xv]

AlShawkany said, "Look at how he limited liyath (turning for good) to no other than the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) and he forgot about Allah, ina lillah wa ina ilieh rajioon."[xvi]

ما سامني الدهر ضيماً واستجرت به * * * إلا ونلت جواراً منه لم يُضَم
Whenever time caused me any distress and I took refuge in him. I receive shelter from him which was not misused. (Chapter 5/17-18)

11) Here he is saying that every time he became worried, distressed or ill, he would call upon the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam), and then these problems would disappear.

In relaying the story of Ibrahim, Allah says the words of Ibrahim, "And when I am ill, it is He who cures me;" (Ash-Shu'ra:80)

Allah says, “And if Allah touches you with harm, none can remove it but He, and if He touches you with good, then He is Able to do all things.” (AlAnam: 17)

The Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) told Ibn Abbas, “If you ask, ask Allah, and if you seek aid, seek it from Allah.”[xvii]

ولن يضيق رسول الله جاهك بي * * * إذا الكريم تحلى باسم منتقم
And O messenger of Allah, your exalted status will not diminish, because of me (intercession on my behalf)
When most Bountiful (Allah Ta’ala) will manifest (Himself) by the name of the punisher. (Chapter 10/3-4)

12) Suliem bin Abdallah bin Muhammad said, “In this line he is seeking from the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) exactly what the mushrikeen sought from their statues, jah, which is intercession to Allah, and that is shirk. Also, the intercession comes from Allah, therefore it should not be asked from other than Allah. Allah permits one to give intercession not the one giving intercession initially.”[xviii]

فإن من جودك الدنيا وضرتها * * * ومن علومك علم اللوح والقلم
For verily amongst your bounties is this world, and the hereafter.
And part of your knowledge is knowledge of the Preserved Tablet (Lowh), and the Pen. (Chapter 10/5-6)

13) Here he is saying that this life and the life after is from the generosity of the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Therefore, this life and the hereafter belong to the Prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Yet Allah attributes both this life and the life after to him.

Allah says, “Truly! Ours it is (to give) guidance, And truly, unto Us (belong) the last (Hereafter) and the first (this world). Therefore I have warned you of a Fire blazing fiercely (Hell); None shall enter it save the most wretched, Who denies and turns away.” (AlLayl 12-16)

In the second line of poetry, Al-Busairi mentions (al-Lahw) which is with Allah alone, as well as (the kalam), which is the unforeseen knowledge, where Allah has written everything that will happen 50,000 years before the creation of the sky and earth. Al-Busairi attributes this knowledge to the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) and claims that the Prophet knows what is in that book.

This is from deviance as Allah says,

“Say: "None in the heavens and the earth knows the *Ghaib* (unseen) except Allah, nor can they perceive when they shall be resurrected." (AlNaml: 65)

“And with Him are the keys of the *Ghaib* (all that is hidden), none knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is in (or on) the earth and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but he knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record.” (AlAn3am: 59)

Conclusion

In conclusion, this poem does nothing but affirm that we, as Muslims, should be firm in our Aqeedah, in our belief and knowledge of Tawheed. This poem affirms that because it is being read at Muslim social events today, we are very ignorant of what is acceptable and unacceptable in our religion. It is also indicative of the fact that dawah materials in English are not readily available to counter these types of deviant works.

Instead of delving into these kinds of poetry, we should encourage the propagation of the authentic writings of the Sahabah such as those of Ka3b bin Zuheir and Hasan bin Thabet, the companions of the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Both of whom wrote remarkable poems which praised the Prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) in the most eloquent terms without falling into shirk and deviance.

May Allah strengthen the Muslims. Ameen

-Ahmad Musa Jibril
13th day of Ramadan, 1425

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[i] Almadeh Alnabawieh – Zaky Mubarak P. 197
[ii] Mukadimat Diwan Albusairy p. 29-30
[iii] Iktida Alsirat Almustakeem 2/692-693
[iv] See his biography in Diwan AlBusairy edited By Muhammad Saeed Kailany p. 5-44& Albusairy Dirasah Wa Nakd
[v] Silsilat aldafeeh 1/299; Alsanany fe Mawduateh P. 46
[vi] Mahabar Al rasool – Abdel Raoof Uthman 169-196
[vii] Fateh Albary 12/49
[viii] Ghaet Al Amany – Alaloosy 2/349
[ix] See above and AlDur Alnaded – Ibn hamdan p. 136
[x] Alrad Ala Alakhniay p, 41
[xi] Narrated by ahmad 4509, Tirmithy 1534
[xii] Altamheed 14/366-367
[xiii] Taiseer al azeez Alhameed p.22; Aldurar Alsunieh 9/51
[xiv] Tayseer Al azeez alhameed 219-220
[xv] Aldorar alsunieh 9/89; and 9/49
[xvi] Al dur alnadeed p, 26
[xvii] Narated by Tirmithy as hasan
[xviii] Aldurar alsunieh 9/52

*All English translations have been derived from http://www.geocities.com/durood/burdah/b1.htm